

**Sudbury Public Schools
Sudbury, Massachusetts
School Committee Regular Meeting
Wednesday April 28, 2010**

Present: Susan Iuliano, Chairperson; Jeff Beeler, Vice Chairman;
Dr. Rich Robison, Michele MacDonald, Lisa Gutch

Also Present: Dr. John Brackett, Superintendent; Bob Milley, Assistant Superintendent, Mary Will, Business and Finance Director; Amie Abdal-Kabir, SEA
L-S Superintendent/Principal Scott Carpenter, L-S School Committee Members Radha Gargeya, Berne Webb, Patricia Mostue, Nancy Marshall, Mark Collins
Lincoln Public Schools Superintendent Michael Brandmeyer, School Committee Members Jennifer Glass, Tom Sander, Al Schmertzler, Tim Christenfeld, Robert Orgel, Joe Connell (Hanscom), Cecily Murdock (Hanscom), Deb Leister (Hanscom)
Wayland Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Gary Burton

Susan Iuliano called the meeting to order at 7:42 p.m. at the Curtis Middle School cafeteria. The meeting was taped for public access broadcast.

1. Joint Session with Lincoln Public Schools and Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School School Committees

(a) Discussion of Reorganization of the METCO Program in Three Districts

Lincoln Public Schools Superintendent Michael Brandmeyer emphasized that all three districts are committed to the academic, social, and emotional growth of the 247 students from Boston who attend school within the districts. He noted that Lincoln was a founding METCO district and that the program enjoys great community support. Recognizing that change is difficult, Superintendent Brandmeyer expressed the need to strengthen the program in light of fiscal constraints. He characterized METCO as an integration program offering all students the opportunity to become more knowledgeable of others' culture, beliefs, and communities.

Superintendent Brandmeyer provided an overview of district collaborations, which have increased in light of fiscal constraints in recent years. Increasing transportation costs and relatively static funding inspired consideration of collective bidding on transportation services. In 2009, the Wayland Public Schools district engaged the three districts in a collaborative known as the G4. Specific plans for collaboration or consolidation have not been created.

L-S Superintendent/Principal Scott Carpenter described the METCO funding process, which is based on enrollment. He outlined trends in funding and transportation costs over the past 20 years. These trends show a gradual reduction in dollars available for programming. Superintendent Carpenter illustrated how, given enrollment figures, transportation cuts have been maximized, and emphasized the need to look at other ways to free up cash for direct services for students.

Sudbury Public Schools Superintendent John Brackett outlined some of the programs that have been discontinued or diminished as funding has become more constrained: elimination of administrative support and reduction of one director position to part-time, elimination or reduction of tutors, diminished after- and summer- school programming, and reductions in extra buses. He emphasized the desire to sustain a program that benefits all students and families, noting that his use of the term "METCO student" is shorthand for SPS students who happen to live in Boston.

With input from school principals, METCO directors, and an internal advisory committee, a proposal was developed to establish a regional partnership for METCO. Superintendent Brackett presented an overview of the proposed organizational structure, which involves a full-time regional director for Lincoln and Sudbury, grades K through 12, administrator, and counselor feeding into local advisory committees for each district. With such a structure, an estimated \$63,000 could be redirected to direct student services, tailored to local program needs.

Among other benefits, Superintendent Brackett noted anticipated improvements in transitions—particularly from Grade 8 to the high school—communications, collaborations, enrollments, and placements. Drawbacks include the loss of existing directors and increased responsibilities for school administrators and staff.

School Committee Comments

Following the Superintendents' presentation, Susan Iuliano invited questions and comments from School Committee Members. Patricia Mostue asked what role METCO, Inc. played in developing the proposal and additionally asked how the proposed staffing compared with Concord-Carlisle and Lexington, two districts

presented as analogous to the proposed partnership.

Superintendent Scott Carpenter indicated that the staffing is not dissimilar to comparable districts. He also stated that METCO, Inc. did not play a role in proposal development, but was informed at the March 25 superintendents' meeting in Lexington. A meeting was held with the executive director just before the April school vacation to elicit thoughts, comments, and concerns.

Radha Gargeya requested more detail on the anticipated smoother transitions, particularly from middle school to high school. Superintendent Carpenter explained that enrollments at particular schools currently create an uneven feeding system into the high school. Under the regional system, opportunities to shift the student population to bring students into the METCO program earlier are expected to improve educational outcomes at the high school level. Additionally, summer programs for Grade 9 students are anticipated to jumpstart those students for high school.

Lisa Gutch asked how success will be measured and how contributing factors to that success would be identified. Superintendent Brackett acknowledged that this is difficult to answer, but stated that some focus will be placed on changes in the student achievement gap, as well as social and emotional successes. Another indicator is the expected increase in direct services, even in the face of dwindling funding. Superintendent Brandmeyer added that it will take some time to answer and understand which changes have had the greatest impact. Superintendent Carpenter emphasized focusing on opportunity gaps in addition to achievement gaps. In his view, one of the most critical skills of the incoming director is the ability to analyze data, particularly surrounding course enrollments and student academic success.

Patricia Mostue stated a concern that in Lincoln, direct service staff would go from five to three individuals, with the director and assistant focused on L-S. Superintendent Brandmeyer disagreed, stating that staffing will stay the same and the director and the assistant will have a presence in all districts.

Rich Robison commended the Superintendents for thinking through the options. He does have questions surrounding implementation and a particular interest in understanding emergency response mechanisms and cultural supports for meshing the three programs.

Superintendent Brandmeyer acknowledged the challenge of regionalizing three distinct programs with distinct operating procedures. He believes that all staff, principals, social workers, and teachers must be responsible for and responsive to the needs of the students, not only those specifically associated with the METCO program. Superintendent Brackett agreed that having three distinct approaches and cultures poses a challenge for the incoming director. Because of the number of schools and the idiosyncrasies of each, he views SPS as a model for such program diversity.

Rich Robison asked how disagreements among the three-person advisory board would be handled. Superintendents Carpenter, Brandmeyer, and Brackett agreed that constant meeting oversight, and feedback will ensure effective practices. Superintendent Carpenter additionally expressed his view of the supervisory committee's responsibility as dealing with the director, while the local advisory committees will deal directly with the district schools and provide feedback to both the director and the supervisory committee. Jennifer Glass inquired about a scenario where the needs or desires of a particular district diverged from the others and suggested that the current School Committees charge the Superintendents to develop a Memorandum of Understanding.

Tim Christenfeld asked how a regional director would be compensated, as well as how responsiveness to Boston families would be guaranteed. Superintendent Brackett responded that SPS will have more direct services in each school and a more direct commitment to particular students and their families. Superintendent Brackett provided an example of teachers and staff from the Curtis Middle School reaching out to families from Boston, without direct involvement of the METCO director. He also noted the work of the parent groups and cooperating families at the level of individual schools. Superintendent Brandmeyer stated that although Lincoln would be giving up a school-level director, he does not believe that the regional director will be unavailable to the district.

Radha Gargeya asked how Chapter 70 funding would be affected; Superintendent Brandmeyer stated that it would remain the same.

Public Comments

METCO, Inc. Executive Director Jean McGuire expressed her dismay that METCO, Inc. was excluded from participating in consolidation conversations at the outset. She emphasized the critical role that the three directors have played in the success of the METCO program, especially in the absence of diversity among staff and administrators within the three districts. Ms. McGuire encouraged the School Committees to explore other options.

Celeste Henry-Williams of Boston attended Lincoln schools. She stated that she is both shocked and insulted that the major stakeholders were not included in discussions. She questioned the timing of the notification, which fell just before the April school vacation. She stated that there had been no due process, which shows a lack of respect to parents.

Mabel Reid-Wallace, a member of the METCO, Inc. Board of Directors and former President of the Board, called the proposal premature and short-sighted. She suggested a bolder step to “return to the trenches” to lobby for funding, challenging a system that she believes denies individuals their civil rights. Ms. Reid-Wallace believes the “powerbrokers” are counting on no civil disobedience to demand civil rights and pointed to the composition of the School Committees to illustrate her point.

Christina Yee, a Lincoln METCO parent, has many questions and concerns. She was shocked to learn of the restructuring proposal at the beginning of April vacation, stating that the information could only be distributed by forwarded email. She is disappointed that stakeholders like herself weren’t informed or asked to express their thoughts. She is dismayed at the lack of transparency in the process to this point, stating that the Lincoln community has valued stakeholder input and has a valued process. Ms. Yee recommends involving all stakeholders before taking any action.

Dr. Kahris McLaughlin, President of the METCO, Inc. Board of Directors and former member of the L-S and Lincoln School Committees, noted that her doctoral dissertation examined the Lincoln experience with METCO. She stated that he wants Boston families to have the same opportunities for participation as Lincoln and Sudbury families. Additionally, Dr. McLaughlin noted that METCO has always been reasonable in its discussions, but this time was not asked to participate. He believes the Board’s opinion matters and that the program exists because of true collaboration. Dr. McLaughlin has also served as a district director; in his view the director’s role is as an advocate for the children, especially in the absence of staff of color. She believes that cultural proficiency is lacking in the three districts and that the regional director will face the impossible task of answering to an advisory committee that then answers to three large school committees.

Harry Benson of Boston and a Lincoln school district parent, expressed concern with having a single director. He emphasized the significance of the current Lincoln director’s knowledge of each participating family.

Ronia Stewart, a METCO, Inc. Board Member whose children are educated in Boston, is troubled by the proposal. She stated that as a parent, she knows students will be negatively impacted socially, emotionally, and culturally. She believes the spirit of the program will be negatively affected as well.

Felicia Howard of Boston is the parent of children attending Lincoln schools and LSRHS. She stated that she cannot envision the program operating under one director and suggested that the School Committees consider eliminating one of the Superintendent’s jobs.

Carol Kochman, a Lincoln resident and former Treasurer and current METCO, Inc. Board Member, echoed all sentiments previously expressed by the public. She asked what other strategies were considered for reducing costs and suggested that data presented indicated that the new proposal might be more expensive than the existing structure.

Cesar Martinez, Vice President of METCO, Inc. and a resident of Acton stated that METCO has diversified the student population it serves. He furthermore stated that METCO, Inc. is charged with leadership for the program, but the organization was given insufficient time to evaluate the proposal.

Beth Taylor, a Lincoln resident, has worked closely with METCO coordinators over many years. She expressed pride in Lincoln’s long involvement with the program, stating that Lincoln is an honored recipient of the children from Boston, a responsibility it takes with the greatest humility. Ms. Taylor commented that she interviewed METCO and cooperating students for a 10-year celebration book. Graduates from Lincoln and Sudbury, as well as those from Boston, spoke of cherishing the chance to interact with students with other backgrounds.

Christina Horner, Lincoln Public Schools METCO Program Director and graduate of the Weston METCO program has several concerns with the regionalization proposal. In particular, she noted her concern as it relates to a potential violation of her contract, which does not expire until August 24, 2011.

Priscilla Smith of Roxbury has an eighth-grade daughter at Curtis and a son at L-S. She stated that L-S students have talked with Curtis students already to help prepare them. She believes that an atmosphere of negativity will develop if administrators do not reach out to students to learn what they’re doing and what else needs to be done.

Sharon Antia has children in both the Lincoln Public Schools and L-S and served on the LPS School Committee. She concurred with all previous statements from the public. She appreciates the fiscal challenges faced by school

districts. She believes that all options should be examined and all stakeholders involved in a process with a high level of transparency.

Nicole Stewart, L-S METCO Program Director and a former METCO student expressed her love of the sense of community and pride in the school and her embarrassment at the lack of transparency in the proposal development process. Ms. Stewart stated that she lives in Newton, also a METCO district. She believes a dollar value cannot be assigned to the program. Ms. Stewart believes the proposal lacks a long-term survival plan and fears the program will be eliminated. She suggested that the Superintendents pressure DESE for funding and develop a long-term vision and plan.

Laurita Kaigler-Crawlle of Boston expressed the need for stakeholder involvement. She also commented on the lack of a profit-loss analysis. Rather than incidents, she suggested that the day-to-day management of the program be the primary concern. Ms. Kaigler-Crawlle commented that a very large body of data shows the value of sustaining a high level of parent engagement in the program and encouraged the Committees to keep this in mind.

Douglas Martin, a parent from Boston, commented on the amazing passion of the parents. He fears that the many dreams realized through METCO will be deferred or destroyed. He believes the director keeps the children on a tight leash to realize their goals. Mr. Martin suggested cost-saving measures such as putting out new bids for transportation, removing renegotiation clauses or adding them to terminate contracts, and hiring a counselor as a consultant. He also suggested sharing administrative assistants and hiring one or two part-time directors in addition to the full-time director. Finally, he recommended districts consider tapping into private endowments and trusts and undertake other fundraising efforts.

Susan Iuliano thanked those in attendance for their comments. She announced an additional opportunity for public comments on Wednesday, May 5 at 7:30 p.m. at the Franklin Park Golf Course. She also introduced Dr. Gary Burton, Superintendent of the Wayland Public Schools and representative to the G4, which is considering coordinating on busing.

Superintendent John Brackett also expressed thanks to the public for its comments, stating that he appreciates the comments about process and the necessity of advocates for students. He indicated a willingness to continue to work with the public and provide additional opportunities for input.

Lincoln School Committee member Jennifer Glass thanked the Superintendents for reflecting on the comments.

Rich Robison stated his appreciation of the opportunity to hear from the community, commenting that the proposal is new to all of us. He concurs with the idea of having someone in an advocacy role and that it must be very clear who will serve in that role. Dr. Robison also commented that he understands that life experiences and cultural differences don't stay at the bus stop. Finally, he acknowledged the importance of stakeholder involvement and was impressed with the public's comments.

Susan Iuliano expressed appreciation for the work and thought the Superintendents gave to find the best way to support students.

Berne Webb agreed with the need to include stakeholders.

(b) G4 Update

Susan Iuliano introduced the G4, which includes the Superintendents and one School Committee Member from Lincoln, Sudbury, Wayland, and Lincoln-Sudbury. In the last year, the G4 has formalized its efforts to operate in a more streamlined and cost-effective manner.

Wayland Superintendent Dr. Gary Burton outlined the history and goals of the collaborative. Superintendent Brackett outlined the six areas undergoing initial examination: professional development, adult community education, enrichment programs, purchasing, payroll, and METCO. An additional 14 areas were identified for future consideration. Subgroups created reports that identified specific program areas for collaboration. For example, the districts possess complementary skills within their ELL programs, with low student enrollment in each district. They are now working as a collaborative department across districts. Cost savings have not been quantified; however, each district benefits from the ability to provide services it wouldn't otherwise be able to provide.

An organization called School Support Services, S³, became aware of consolidation discussions and is providing *pro bono* work with payroll to determine if mechanisms for cost savings exist.

Mark Collins asked for more information about S³ and about its time frame for reviewing payroll. Superintendent Brandmeyer stated that two individuals saw a press release and expressed interest in working with the

collaborative. He is unsure if the organization is a formal entity. A time frame for review of payroll has not been specified.

The Superintendents reported that Lincoln and Sudbury are aligning District calendars in hope of having some combined professional development time and to share costs.

The next step is to combine reports into a master report that the G4 hopes will be available by the end of the school year.

Other Committee Comments

Tom Sander expressed an interest in hearing other ideas from the METCO, Inc. Board on closing the achievement gap.

(c) Adjourn the Joint Meeting

VOTED: On a motion by Patricia Mostue, seconded by Jennifer Glass, to adjourn the joint meeting of the Lincoln Public Schools, Sudbury Public Schools, and Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School School Committees. The vote was 18–0 in favor. The time was 10:32 p.m.

2. **Reconvene Sudbury Public Schools Regular Meeting**

Susan Iuliano called the meeting to order at 10:40 p.m.

3. **Reorganization of the School Committee**

(a) Welcome new member Lisa Gutch

Susan Iuliano welcomed newly elected Committee Member Lisa Gutch.

(b) Selection of School Committee Chair and Vice Chair

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Rich Robison, to appoint Susan Iuliano as Chairperson of the School Committee. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

VOTED: On a motion by Michele MacDonald, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to appoint Jeff Beeler as Vice Chairman of the School Committee. The vote was 4–0 in favor. Jeff Beeler abstained.

(c) Assignment of Liaisons, Subcommittees, and MASC Delegate Tabled.

The Committee concurred with Jeff Beeler’s suggestion to add the G4 and the Consolidation Working Group and remove the Budget Review Task Force.

(d) School Committee Meeting Schedule Tabled.

4. **School Committee Report**

None.

5. **Open Forum**

No comments.

6. **Superintendent’s Report**

(a) Donations

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Rich Robison, to accept with thanks a donation of \$1,500 from the Sudbury Foundation to enable SPS to host a presentation on the successful use of online technology given by Professor Elizabeth Englander of Bridgewater State University. The vote was 4–0 in favor. Susan Iuliano abstained.

(b) Recognitions None.

(c) Bill schedule A Bill Schedule was presented.

(d) Personnel Actions As outlined in the Personnel Packet.

7. **Minutes, Regular and Special Sessions**

Tabled.

8. Communications

As outlined in the Communications Packet.

9. Members' Forum

No comments.

10 Executive Session

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to adjourn to Executive Session to discuss litigation strategy, not to return to Open Session. The vote was 5–0 in favor. The time was 10:46 p.m.

Yes	Susan Iuliano
Yes	Jeff Beeler
Yes	Rich Robison
Yes	Michele MacDonald
Yes	Lisa Gutch

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito, Recording Secretary